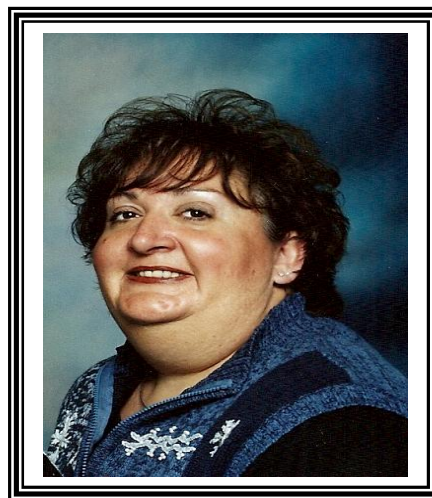


# Become A Special Educator In Tennessee

## Feature Story

**Felicia F. Riner**  
**B.S. –Special Education**  
**Middle Tennessee State University**  
**Murfreesboro, Tennessee**



When one door closes another door opens. We have all heard the expression, but have you truly experienced it?

Prior to returning to college, I worked with organizations and agencies which provided services for individuals with special needs. My clients were individuals with mental illnesses, alcohol and drug dependencies, learning disabilities, neurodevelopmental disorders and many others. I have also been a job coach for Mental Health Services and a licensed child care provider working closely with the local child development centers. More recently, I served as an educational interpreter for a student with a profound hearing impairment and as an educational assistant in a Pre-K comprehensive developmental classroom in a local public school system.

As a single parent with two teenage boys, I found myself struggling to survive on the salary of an educational assistant. I made the decision to return to school and pursue my one desire – nursing. Yes, I said nursing. I have always thought that was how I was to live my life -- caring for others. Soon after returning to college, that door was closed. It was then that I realized for the past several years, I have been assisting children with special needs and that was the path I should follow. Well, the door was opened and the path became very clear.

Upon enrolling at Middle TN State University (MTSU), I became aware of the Become A Special Educator in TN (BASE –TN) Program. BASE-TN is designed to provide financial support to individuals who meet the eligibility criteria and have the desire to earn an initial Tennessee teacher license in special education or an endorsement in special education. This support involves a commitment to teach in a Tennessee public school two years for each academic year of financial support received, serving students with disabilities. BASE-TN paved the way for me by providing the financial support I need to make my desires become realities.

In December of 2007, I graduated from MTSU and embarked on the next phase of my life. In January 2008, I was employed by Lincoln County Schools as a special education teacher working with students with special needs. I am grateful for open doors and for the BASE TN Program. As a teacher, I truly enjoy making a difference in the quality of life of so many individuals! Knowledge is power! The knowledge and skills that I share with my students give them the power to make a difference not only in their lives but in the lives of others. As educators, we must be committed to changing the future “one child at a time.” The BASE-TN Program sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education, made this a reality for me!